

Security Staffing Assessment

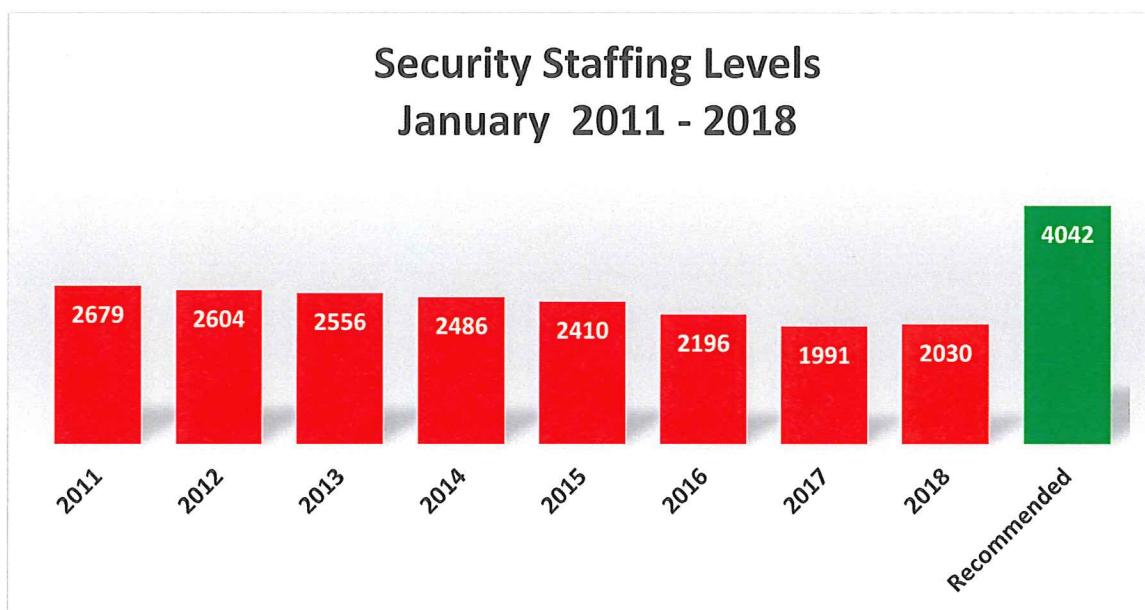
South Carolina Department of Corrections

A review of thirteen correctional institutions to determine the required security staffing levels necessary to meet established responsibilities

March 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although the number of inmates within the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) has steadily dropped, the agency still faces a significant shortage in the number of security personnel available to meet the mission of the agency. The primary purpose of this project is to identify the recommended number of security staff necessary to meet existing responsibilities. The study indicates that for the thirteen institutions included in the review, a total of 4,042 security positions are being recommended. On January 1, 2018, there were 2,030 security staff assigned to the same facilities. The recommendations are reflective of establishing an effective level of security personnel for each institution in a manner consistent with individual institutional needs, professional industry standards and practices.



Security staffing levels have not been aligned with meeting established workload responsibilities for an extended period. This occurrence is not the result of a recent event or circumstance; however, has been an ongoing trend and only recently in the past two years been exacerbated by the growing number of alternative job opportunities available. Half of the thirteen institutions reviewed were operating with fewer than 50% of the security personnel needed, and not one of the institutions was operating at higher than 62%. On average the facilities were operating at 50.5% of the recommended staffing level.

Facility management personnel have had to deviate from the established staffing plan and implement initiatives to maintain minimum operations at each facility. These initiatives often result in higher operating costs, elevated turnover rates, assaults, and a reduction in services.

As front-line staff account for most of the overall security positions, they also account for most of the vacancies. Approximately 1,440 of the vacancies are in the front-line positions. This includes cadets, correctional officer I/II's and corporals.

Recommended Security Staffing			
SECURITY STAFFING	RECOMMENDED	1/1/2018	DIFFERENCE
Level 3			
Broad River	376	202	174
Lee	375	195	180
Lieber	355	159	196
McCormick	283	108	175
Perry	340	145	195
Kirkland	533	304	229
Level 2			
Ridgeland	215	109	106
Turbeville	292	164	128
Tyger River	350	147	203
Kershaw	263	152	111
Evans	261	121	140
Females - Multi-Level			
Leath	160	77	83
Graham	239	147	92
Total	4042	2030	2012

Employment Options.

Department executive personnel have recognized the staffing issue and have aggressively identified hiring and staff retention as a priority for the department. Efforts by the department have been both expansive and creative. All the traditional marketing methods have been used as well as applying methods beyond the norm. With the state and federal unemployment rates being in the 4.1% range at the time this report was prepared, a surplus of employment options are available for both potential candidates and existing employees seeking new opportunities.

The state of South Carolina and the Department of Corrections is not alone in this challenge. Within the past two years at least ten states have recognized the need to establish increasing incentives for state correctional staff by approving legislation resulting in a combination of pay raises, annual increases, comparable leave-time provisions, and sign-on bonuses. Compensation and incentives are steadily increasing on a national basis to commensurate with the duties associated with performing one of the more demanding responsibilities within state government.

For the department to have any opportunity to meet the staffing levels required to accomplish the established responsibilities of the department, legislative support and initiative is a requisite.

Scheduling and Staff Availability.

In the corrections industry it is critical to clearly identify the workload responsibilities to be met and to establish assignments designed to meet those responsibilities. In an industry where safety is paramount for both staff and inmates, the availability of sufficient personnel and the effective deployment of well-trained staff is essential to achieving the goal of successfully maintaining overall operations. When that does not occur the most common responses are:

- *Excessive overtime expenditures (The state pays more to get the same job done);*
- *Temporary curtailment of programs, services and treatment (Failing to meet the mission);*
- *Post assignments do not get filled (Safety); and*
- *Operational deficiencies are exposed to all concerned. Observed deficiencies often lead to perceived opportunities which can result in contraband, assaults and escape-related incidents.*

As part of the recommendation process, work schedules and the frequency in which staff are available to fill a post assignment were reviewed.

There are several different work schedule options to consider when deploying security personnel. The department follows the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and state guidelines regarding work hours and overtime. South Carolina wage and hour laws are primarily adaptations of the federal laws. Established work periods and overtime thresholds have been defined to allow the most cost-effective schedules to be applied.

In comparing a 12-hour work schedule with a more traditional 8-hour schedule from an initial cost perspective, fewer staff are required to fill the same posts when applying the 12-hour schedule. Additional factors to be considered when choosing a work schedule include whether staff support the recommended schedule, the impact and ability to back-fill vacant assignments and the fatigue factor. The application of a 12-hour, (168 hrs.) work schedule is recommended. Staff would be scheduled to 168 hours per pay cycle.

A second element which influences the ability to meet workload responsibilities includes identifying the average number of hours staff are available to fill a post assignment. Shift relief factors were developed for each institution, by security level and as an overall average. Applying a shift relief factor is critical to determine how many full-time staff are needed to fill one post assignment throughout the year.

The shift relief factors were based on average reported leave/off-post time for the most recent completed three-year period.

The following table provides a breakdown by institution of the revised shift relief factors when applying three different work schedules. The shift relief factor (SRF) represents the average number of staff required to fill one 24-hr. assignment throughout the year.

SCDC Updated Shift Relief Factors - 2018			
Average 2015, 2016, 2017	8 Hour Shift 24/7 days (160 hrs.)	Straight 12 Hour Shift 24/7 days (168 hrs.)	Combined 10 hr./8 hr. (160 hrs.)
Institution			
<i>Level 3</i>			
Broad River	5.45	5.03	5.88
Kirkland	5.56	5.12	5.98
Lee	5.56	5.13	5.99
Lieber	5.47	5.04	5.89
McCormick	5.67	5.21	6.11
Perry	5.45	5.03	5.88
Average	5.53	5.09	5.96
<i>Level 2</i>			
Evans	5.33	4.92	5.75
Ridgeland	5.49	5.06	5.92
Turbeville	5.57	5.13	6.01
Tyger River	5.35	4.94	5.76
Kershaw	5.41	4.99	5.82
Average	5.43	5.01	5.85
<i>Female</i>			
Camille Graham	5.46	5.03	5.88
Leath	5.56	5.12	5.99
Average	5.51	5.08	5.94
Overall Average	5.49	5.06	5.91
Ten Posts - 24/7	54.9	50.6	59.1

The table identifies the “Straight 12-Hour Shift” as the work schedule which results in the fewest number of staff to be required. Staff assigned are scheduled to work (168) hours in a 28-day cycle.

The remaining work schedules result in staff scheduled to work (160) hours in a 28-day period. After applying the additional 8-hours per pay-cycle, the straight 12-hour schedule remains initially the most cost-effective.

As noted, additional factors to be considered when choosing a work schedule should include whether staff support the work schedule, the impact and ability to back-fill vacant assignments and the associated fatigue factor.

Additional information derived from collecting the shift relief data for the three-year period includes:

- The average full-term security employee worked approximately (46) fewer hours in 2017 compared to 2015;
- The average full-term employee used (111) sick-leave hours in 2017. In 2015, an average of 87 hours of sick-leave was used;
- The average full-term security employee at McCormick used (146) hours of sick-time in 2017. The average at the remaining level 3 facilities was (107.8).

Shift relief data is inputted at the institutional level and managed by personnel from the Resource and Information System. Data is submitted for all full-term security staff and is not sorted based on work schedules. To determine whether staff assigned to one work schedule may result in less overall leave-time being used, the department may want to consider establishing a pilot-study.

Roster Management

The fundamentals of an operations-based roster management system are in place. The Division of Security has established a system that incorporates all the required elements to identify, deploy and track staff utilization. As staffing levels within the institutions decreased and personnel changes occurred, portions of the system began to breakdown. During the review period, post assignments identified as "mandatory" go unfilled, minimum staffing levels established by the department are no longer consistently being met, required full-shift post assignments are being filled intermittently and daily shift rosters have become less accurate.

Without the use of an effective roster management system it becomes extremely difficult to communicate the staffing needs to major stakeholders. As a result, the actual number of staff required for each facility becomes unknown. When staffing levels are operating at approximately 50% of the required level, the institutions are limited in what can be accomplished. However, staff can ensure shift schedules are balanced, deployment practices are prioritized, and accurate documentation is provided to reflect how staff are used. Daily shift rosters should be viewed as potential legal documents, that identify post assignment coverage.

A training curriculum should be developed to address appropriate roster management issues and to better prepare institutional personnel in how to properly maintain their roster management systems.

Post Assignment Enhancements

Recommended staffing levels have been developed based on identified workload responsibilities for the thirteen institutions. Workload responsibilities were determined after considering the mission of each institution, applicable state and federal laws, national standards, best practices, SCDC policies and directives and the 2016 approved Mental Health Settlement Agreement (*T.R. V. South Carolina Department of Corrections, No. 2005-CP-40-02925*).

The results of the assessment reflect each institution requires significantly more security staff to meet existing responsibilities. A total 4,042 security positions are being recommended and on January 1, 2018, there were 2,030 assigned. Additional personnel are recommended for each institution and in every classification except for the “major” position. 68% of the recommended positions are considered front-line staff which includes cadets, correctional officer I/II’s and corporals. The recommendations are based on each institution being fully operational including the use of housing areas and select posts not routinely being used.

The recommendations represent a combination of factors that include the following:

- A Shift Relief Factor (SRF) is applied to most post assignments to recognize the importance and potential impact of not meeting the associated workload responsibilities. The lack of applying a SRF, will result in not enough personnel being built into the roster, thereby increasing the probability that post assignments go unmanned.
- Additional security personnel are recommended for all inmate housing units. The workload responsibilities of a correctional officer assigned to a housing unit are expansive. Based on the everyday responsibilities of an officer and the activity levels of housing units, the current staffing practice is inconsistent with realistic expectations of what an officer can accomplish.
- Additional security personnel are recommended for each yard. Observed practices, supported by daily rosters reflected no yard officers, one officer and/or intermittent coverage is normally provided. It is an essential and fundamental correctional practice that security staff be available to conduct security checks throughout the facility, provide support, be available to monitor, control and authorize inmate movement and to serve as first responders.
- Additional individual post assignments are being recommended to meet existing workloads that are routinely being met by staff working overtime or not being met, and to address areas to be consistent with established policies and professional industry standards and practices. This includes:
 - Providing sufficient personnel for outside hospital coverage;

- Establishing institutional security compliance personnel;
- Recognizing the personnel requirements necessary to apply an integrated approach to the operations of residential mental health treatment programs;
- Providing medical escort/security coverage to ensure program and treatment services are provided as needed in a secure manner;
- Establishing a Front-End Sergeant position to address area responsibilities;
- Establishing Security Relief posts to meet established policies that require staff receive at least one 30-minute break each shift;
- Establishing a Field Training Sergeant position for each institution to assist in providing on-post mentoring, support and guidance; and
- Establishing a Security Captain position for each level 3 facility to coordinate, develop and enforce in-house strategies designed to enhance overall security within the facility.

Summary Statement

For the past several years the executive leadership team of the South Carolina Department of Corrections has explored most every option to effectively operate the institutions in a manner that is consistent with the mission of the agency. Due to staffing levels, existing human resources have been overextended, day-to-day operations have been streamlined, and program and treatment services have been curtailed.

There is simply not enough security staff assigned to effectively meet the established responsibilities on a consistent basis. Staff utilization patterns, alternative work schedules, condensed housing, enhanced physical plant security, and centralized programs and services have all been thoroughly examined and implemented to ensure the most cost-effective practices are being applied.

It is not a question of ineffective policies, inappropriate use of available resources or an executive leadership team that is not committed. Unless there is a dramatic decrease in the overall number of inmates housed within the facilities that would reduce the workload or a significant increase in staff, there will continue to be challenges to maintain an environment consistent with the department's mission.

The average overall staffing level of the (13) institutions was approximately 50 percent of the recommended level, required to effectively meet the workload requirements. Most of the operational deficiencies cited in the report can be attributed in variable magnitudes to existing staffing levels.